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# LAWRENCE TOWNSHIP – COMMUNITY SATISFACTION SURVEY

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SEPTEMBER / OCTOBER 2002

PREPARED BY



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# Lawrence Township Community Satisfaction Survey

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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This report represents the findings of 513 responses to the Lawrence Township (Tuscarawas County) Community Satisfaction Survey. These data represent a snapshot of the views concerning a variety of issues in Lawrence Township at this time. Township officials may find the data useful on two levels. First, general views about the delivery and quality of the services provided to residents may be valuable in long range planning efforts. Second, residents' views and ratings of specific conditions provide baseline data for continued benchmarking and ongoing evaluation. We are pleased to have worked with Township officials. Township Trustee Tedd L. Finlayson II provided valuable input into the development and administration of the survey project.

The following individuals comprised the project team:

***Center for Public Management and Regional Affairs:***

- Dr. Philip A. Russo, Jr., Director
- Andrew M. Dudas, Sr. Project Manager
- Lori B. Libby, Sr. Project Manager
- Mark H. Morris, Sr. Project Manager
- Carter Hewgley, Andrew Merrick, and Megan Statt provided assistance with the production and data entry of this survey.

***Lawrence Township:***

- Tedd L. Finlayson II, Chairman, Trustee
- Fred W. Pederson, Trustee
- Mark W. Haueter, Trustee

The Center for Public Management and Regional Affairs at Miami University engages in applied research, technical assistance services, training and education, and data base development in the areas of public management and capacity building, local government economic development and planning, and public program evaluation and policy research. The Center's full-time professional staff hold advanced degrees in public administration, policy/program evaluation, and community planning. The Center's activities are funded by external grants and contracts from a number of funding sources including Ohio's Rural Universities Program and the U.S. Department of Commerce, Economic Development Administration.

Respectfully,

Philip A. Russo, Jr.  
Director, Center for Public Management and Regional Affairs  
Professor, Political Science, Miami University

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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This section provides a brief overview of the key findings from the Lawrence Township (Tuscarawas County) Community Satisfaction Survey conducted by the Center for Public Management and Regional Affairs at Miami University. The total response rate to the survey was 55.2%. Note: The response rate is calculated using the total number of households mailed (1,088) less vacant (30) and undeliverable (128) addresses for a net total of 930 households.

Net Households Mailed	930
Households Responding	513
Response Rate	55.2%
Confidence Interval	± 4.0%

- 38.7% of the respondents have lived in the Township for more than 20 years.
- Nine out of ten respondents (90.6%) are homeowners.
- Respondent gender was 56% female and 44% male.
- 77.6% of the respondents are married.
- 92.6% of the respondents are very satisfied (33.9%) or satisfied (58.7%) with living in the Township.
- 60.2% of the respondents think the Township has “stayed about the same” the past five years.
- 75.1% of the respondents indicated they were “happy here and will probably stay for the next five years.”
- 71.7%, 83.1%, and 80.4% are very satisfied or satisfied with police protection, fire protection, and emergency medical services respectively.
- 21.1% are very dissatisfied or dissatisfied with zoning enforcement in the Township.
- 41.0% of the respondents do not support relocating S.R. 212 to Wilkshire Boulevard.

- 66.6% of the respondents are satisfied with the current level of police protection provided by the township.
- 52.2% think the Township should consider creating a paid, full-time police department in the next three to five years.
- 55.7% think the Township should consider purchasing and installing an Emergency Warning System (sirens) throughout the Township.
- Unattended pets (115), lawn heights and vacant lots (101), and miscellaneous junk (90) were the most commonly cited public nuisances that the Township has not adequately addressed.
- 64.6% of the respondents were aware of the drop-off recycling program at the Giant Eagle.
- 34.5% think the Township should consider contracting with a private hauler to provide waste and recycling pickup for all residents.
- 53.8% of the respondents would like to see more public parks and recreational facilities developed within the Township with fitness trail/walking path being the most commonly cited (198).

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## INTRODUCTION

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Lawrence Township is located in Tuscarawas County, Ohio. According to the 2000 United States Census, Lawrence Township has a total population of 5,241 living in 2,018 households. The Villages of Bolivar and Zoar are located within the township borders and are included in the total household population for the purposes of this survey project.

The staff at the Center for Public Management and Regional Affairs at Miami University conducted a mail survey for Lawrence Township in September and October 2002. Township officials were interested in assessing residents' attitudes towards a variety of services provided by the Township. They were also interested in identifying preferences and interests of residents that could be used in long-term planning efforts for the Township.

The purpose of the survey was to gather information from a *random sample of households* within Lawrence Township. The objectives of the survey were to better understand current

satisfaction levels with Township services and to identify areas or issues that may require the attention of Township officials in the future. Through an objective analysis of survey responses, Township officials can evaluate these findings and establish priorities and strategies to better address the needs of the entire community.

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## SURVEY INSTRUMENT

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The survey instrument was drafted by the staff at the Center for Public Management and Regional Affairs in consultation with Lawrence Township officials. The survey used a combination of multiple choice and open-ended questions to obtain responses from participants. A copy of the survey instrument can be found in Appendix A.

The first set of questions asked about life in Lawrence Township. Respondents were asked to indicate how long they have lived in Lawrence Township, their overall satisfaction with living in the Township, and how living in the Township had changed over the past five years. Respondents were then asked to list three positive and three negative aspects to living in Lawrence Township. Finally, respondents were asked about their intentions to remain in Lawrence Township or move away in the next five years.

The second set of questions gathered information on a variety of Township services offered to residents. Respondents were asked to indicate satisfaction levels with Township services including: police protection, fire protection, emergency medical services, street & road maintenance, and zoning enforcement. Respondents were then asked to rate the change over the past three years of a variety of street, road, and sign conditions. Lastly, respondents were asked to identify their preferences regarding the potential relocation of State Route 212.

A third set of questions focused specifically on public safety in the Township. Respondents were asked to indicate their satisfaction with current levels of police protection, fire protection, and emergency medical services. They were then asked to indicate how safe they felt in their neighborhood. Respondents were also asked to indicate their level of satisfaction with specific police services including: on-duty patrol, response time to requests, and general community outreach. They were asked how many times they had seen on-duty police patrols in their neighborhood over the past month. Respondents were then given a list of areas in which police service could improve and asked to select all that applied. Finally, respondents were asked to indicate their preferences towards the creation of a paid, full-time police force and the purchasing and installation of an emergency warning system in the Township.

A fourth set of questions asked respondents about other services provided by the Township. More specifically, these questions asked respondents about cleanliness in the Township and their feelings about public nuisances. In addition, respondents were asked to indicate their awareness of the Township's recycling program and their preferences towards contracting with a private hauler for waste and recycling pickup.

A fifth set of questions asked about the parks and recreation facilities provided by the Township. Respondents were first asked their opinion on expanding public parks and recreation facilities in the Township. They were then asked to indicate which facilities they might like to see developed within the Township.

A sixth set of questions asked respondents about their attitudes and perceptions about Township government.

The final set of questions collected a number of demographic characteristics including: home ownership, family size and ages, gender, and marital status. Each section of the survey

provided respondents with an opportunity to write-in additional thoughts or comments if they desired.

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## SURVEY METHODOLOGY

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A survey questionnaire was mailed to a random sample of households in Lawrence Township. The household mailing list was based on a list purchased by the Trustees from American Consumer Lists. A total of 2,133 households were included on the purchased list. Using computer software, a random sample of approximately 50% of the total households was selected to receive a survey instrument. A total of 1,088 surveys were mailed to these randomly selected households in September 2002. Each survey packet included a survey instrument and a return-addressed postage-paid envelope. The survey requested that one member of the household who is 18 years of age or older and a resident of the Township complete the survey. A reminder card was mailed one week after the first survey instrument had been mailed. A second survey instrument was mailed approximately three weeks after the first one. The second survey instrument packet was identical to the first one and provided households with a second opportunity to participate. A second reminder card was mailed one week after the second instrument had been mailed. A total of 513 usable responses were returned, for a response rate of 55.2%<sup>1</sup>.

The standard margin of sampling error in this survey is plus or minus four percentage points ( $\pm 4\%$ ) in 95 out of 100 cases. This means that if a survey is conducted 100 times, in 95

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<sup>1</sup> The response rate is calculated by subtracting the vacant addresses (30) and the other returned surveys (128) from the total number of households mailed (1,088) for a net household base of 930.

cases the results will not vary by more than four percentage points from the results if all Township residents had been surveyed and responded.

All surveys are subject to sources of error, such as bias in the wording of questions, timing, issue salience, etc. The instrument design, format, and timing were chosen to increase the response rate and to minimize bias. There is little reason to suspect that the data collection procedures introduced any significant bias; the findings reported herein can be taken confidently as an accurate reflection of respondent opinion at the time. However, these opinions may and do change over time. Therefore, they reflect a snapshot of respondents' views only at the time of the survey.

The majority of surveys returned were completed in full. However, some respondents chose not to answer parts or specific questions in the survey. Incomplete surveys were included in the database, thus some questions may have more responses than others. Due to rounding, some of the reported percentages may not equal 100%.

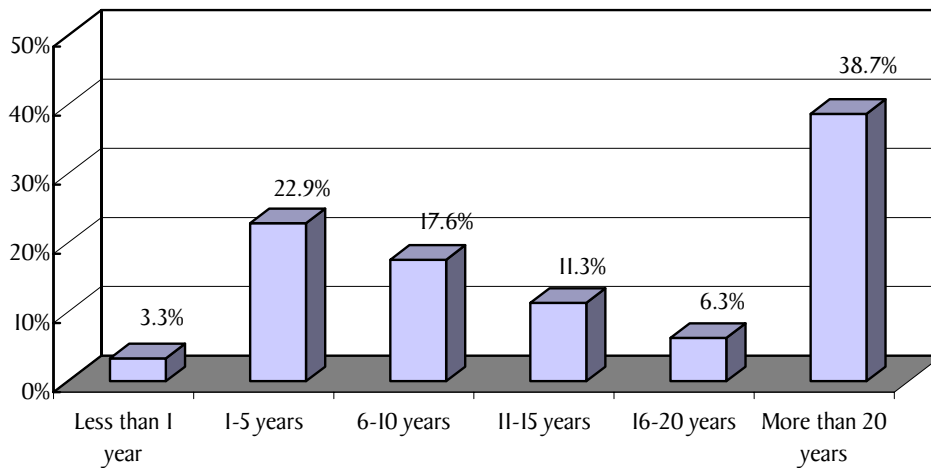
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## SURVEY RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

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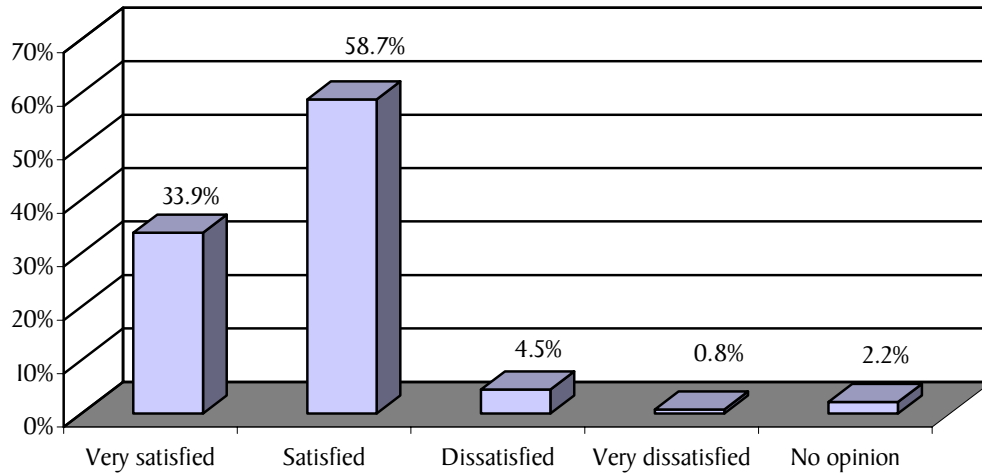
**TOWNSHIP LIFE:** It is not uncommon for long-term residents (more than 20 years) to account for a majority of the responses to a community survey of this nature. As the chart below indicates, respondents to the Lawrence Township survey are well distributed across all of the residency categories. While nearly four out of ten respondents were long-term residents, just over two in ten have resided in the Township for five years or less. This is a positive indicator of wide spread interest in the Township by both longer-term residents as well as relative newcomers.

How long have you lived in Lawrence Township? (N=512)



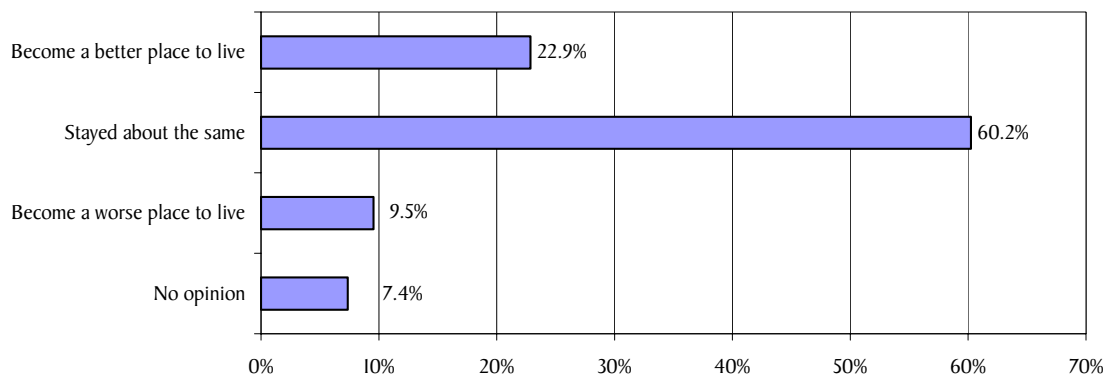
Over nine out of ten respondents indicated their overall satisfaction with living in Lawrence Township. Just over three in ten (33.9%) indicated they were very satisfied, while nearly six in ten (58.7%) indicated being satisfied. Only 5.3% of the respondents indicated they were dissatisfied (4.5%) or very dissatisfied (0.8%) with living in the Township.

**How satisfied are you with living in Lawrence Township? (N=511)**



As a second measure of satisfaction, we asked respondents to consider how living in the Township has changed over the past five years. While 60.2% indicated life in the Township has “stayed about the same,” 22.9% indicated Lawrence Township had “become a better place to live.” Only 9.5% thought the Township had “become a worse place to live” over the past five years.

**In the past five years, do you think Lawrence Township has "become a better place to live, stayed about the same, or become a worse place to live?" (N=503)**



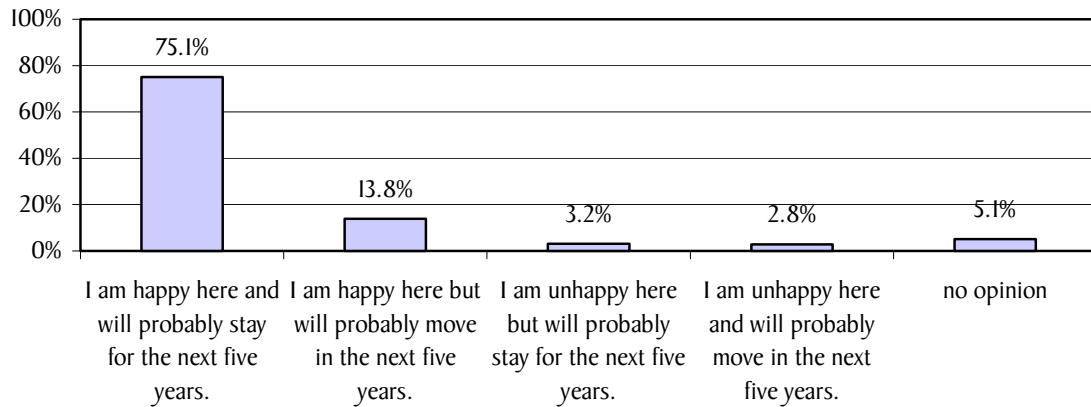
Respondents were asked to identify three positive and three negative aspects to living in Lawrence Township. Over 1,800 discrete comments were provided in response to these two

questions (1,000 positive aspects and 800 negative aspects). Both sets of comments were subjected to a content analysis that allowed similar responses to be aggregated into general categories. Approximately six out of ten positive aspects identified were aggregated into “quality of life” issues. These positive quality of life aspects included such things as the small town atmosphere, country living, a clean appearance to the community, low crime rates/personal safety, and a strong sense of community. Other positive aspects identified included the proximity of the Township to services and the quality of public services provided to residents.

The negative aspects to living in the Township were more broadly dispersed across a variety of categories. Government related issues (especially tax rates), public services (street maintenance and nuisance abatement), and the lack of private services (retail) were the most frequently cited negative aspects. While many respondents indicated it to be a positive aspect, a limited number of respondents found the small town/country living aspect to be a negative one. All of the positive and negative aspects can be found in Appendix C.

While a previous question asked respondents to take a retrospective look and assess change over the past five years, the next question asked them to look into the future. Again using a five-year time horizon, respondents were asked to indicate both their level of happiness and whether or not they anticipated staying in the Township. As the following chart shows, three out of four respondents are both happy in Lawrence Township and intend to stay for the next five years. This information may be useful to the Township as it looks to develop longer-term plans and strategies for what appears to be a fairly stable population base.

**Which of the following statements best describes how you feel about living in Lawrence Township? (N=507)**



**TOWNSHIP SERVICES:** Lawrence Township provides a number of services to its residents. Respondents were asked to indicate their overall satisfaction level with these township services. Four of the five services had overall satisfaction levels (very satisfied and satisfied) greater than 70%. Only two services (street and road conditions and zoning enforcement) had dissatisfaction levels greater than 10% with the highest dissatisfaction levels associated with zoning enforcement. Details are shown in the table below.

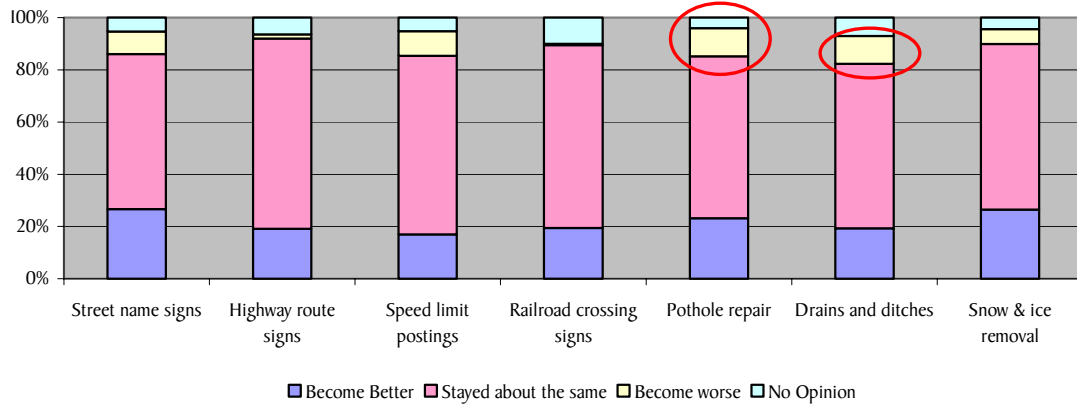
**Table I: Township Services Satisfaction Levels**

	Very Satisfied	Satisfied	Neutral	Dissatisfied	Very Dissatisfied
Police Protection	19.6%	52.1%	22.2%	4.2%	1.8%
Fire Protection	37.3%	45.8%	16.1%	0.6%	0.2%
Emergency Medical Services	37.3%	43.1%	17.2%	1.6%	0.8%
Street and Road Conditions	19.6%	50.1%	17.4%	10.6%	2.2%
Zoning Enforcement	11.0%	34.1%	33.7%	12.7%	8.4%

While overall satisfaction levels are relatively high, it is helpful to consider how respondents view the changes in specific Township services over a period of time. As the chart below indicates, most respondents indicated Township public works/street conditions have “stayed

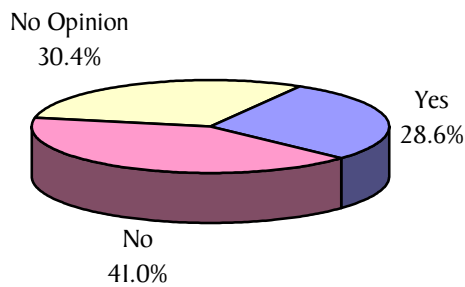
about the same” (pink bars) over the past three years. Only pothole repair (10.8%) and drains and ditches (10.7%) had more than 10% of the respondents indicate the service had “become worse” in the past three years (yellow bars).

Over the past three years, have the following public works/street conditions listed below "become better, stayed about the same, or become worse?" (N=varies)



Respondents were also asked to indicate their preference for the relocation of State Route 212 to Wilkshire Boulevard.

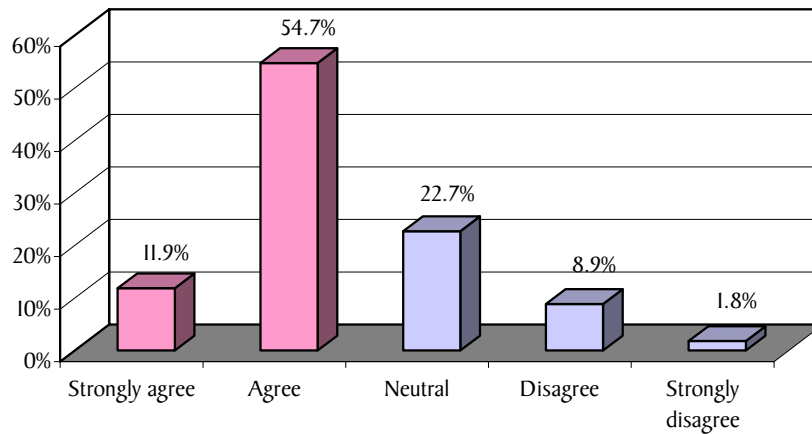
Do you support relocating S.R. 212 to Wilkshire Boulevard? (N=500)



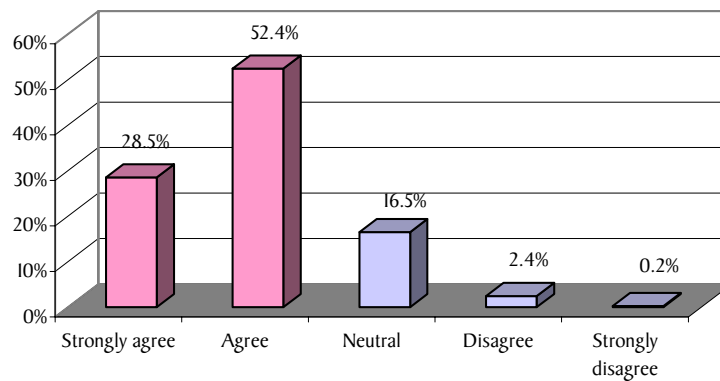
While four out of ten respondents indicated they were opposed to the relocation, three out of ten indicated no preference. Several respondents indicated no awareness of this issue which may in part explain the number of respondents with no opinion.

**PUBLIC SAFETY:** Previously, respondents indicated their overall satisfaction with public safety services in the Township. This set of questions asks them to consider the levels of public safety services provided to residents. Like overall satisfaction levels, respondents indicated high satisfaction rates with the level of public safety services provided.

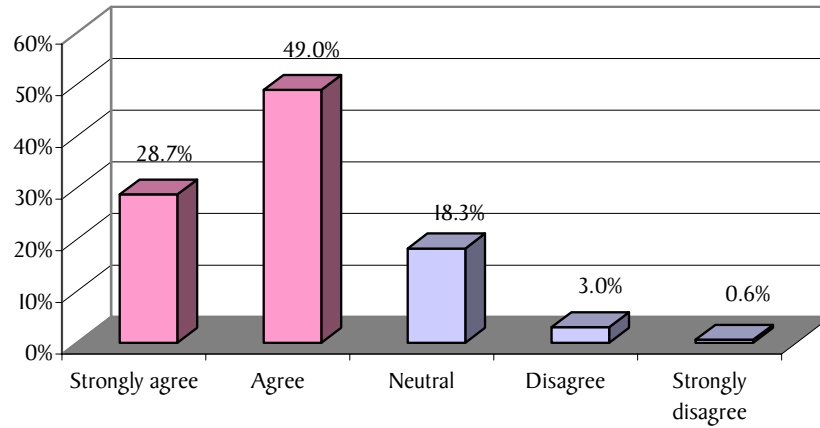
**Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statement:  
"I am satisfied with the current level of police protection provided by the Township."  
(N=497)**



**Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statement:  
"I am satisfied with the current level of fire protection provided by the Township."  
(N=498)**

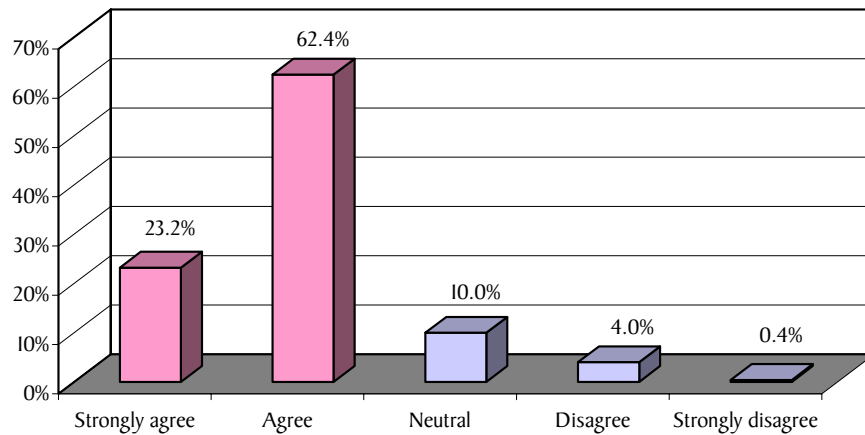


Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statement:  
"I am satisfied with the current level of emergency medical service (EMS) provided by  
the Township." (N=496)



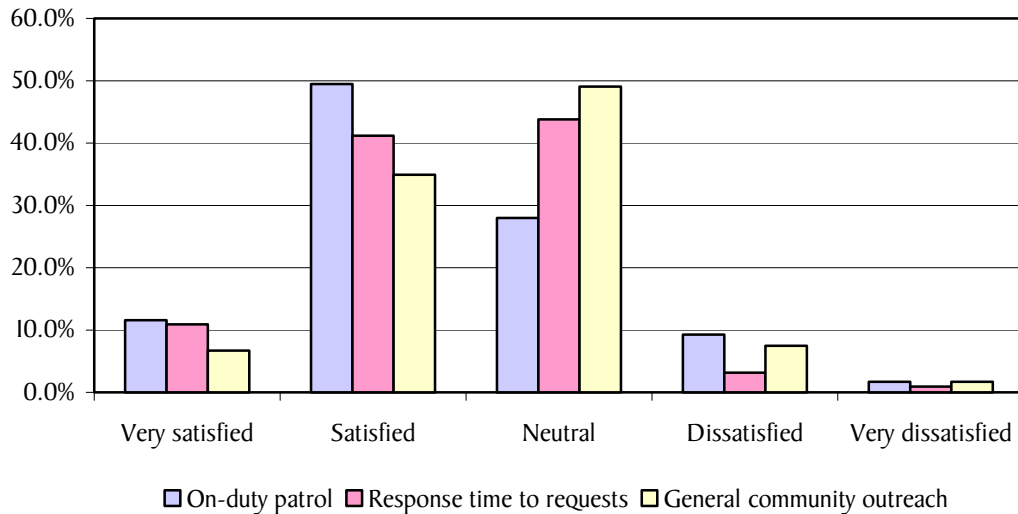
Looking more specifically at police services, respondents were first asked to consider how safe they felt in their neighborhood. More than eight out of ten respondents indicated their agreement with the statement shown below.

Please indicate your agreement with the following statement: "I feel safe in my  
neighborhood." (N=500)



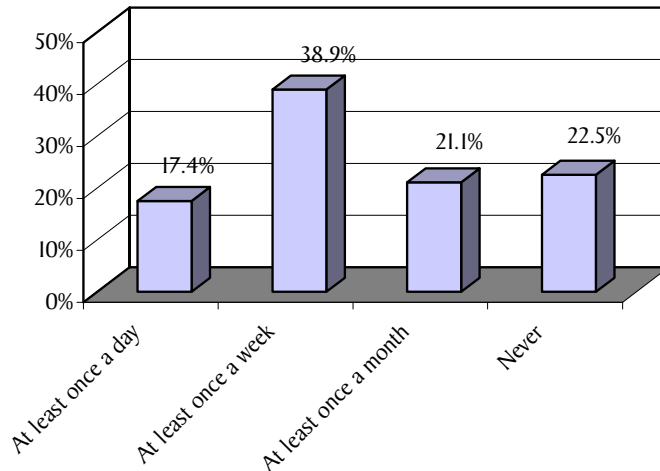
While there were a fair number of neutral responses, overall respondents indicated their satisfaction with on-duty patrol, response time to requests, and general community outreach by the police.

**In general, how satisfied are you with the following areas of police service?  
(N=varies)**



As a measure of respondent's perception of police visibility, they were asked approximately how many times they saw police patrolling in their neighborhoods. Over half of the respondents indicated seeing the police at least once a week (38.9%) or at least once a day (17.4%).

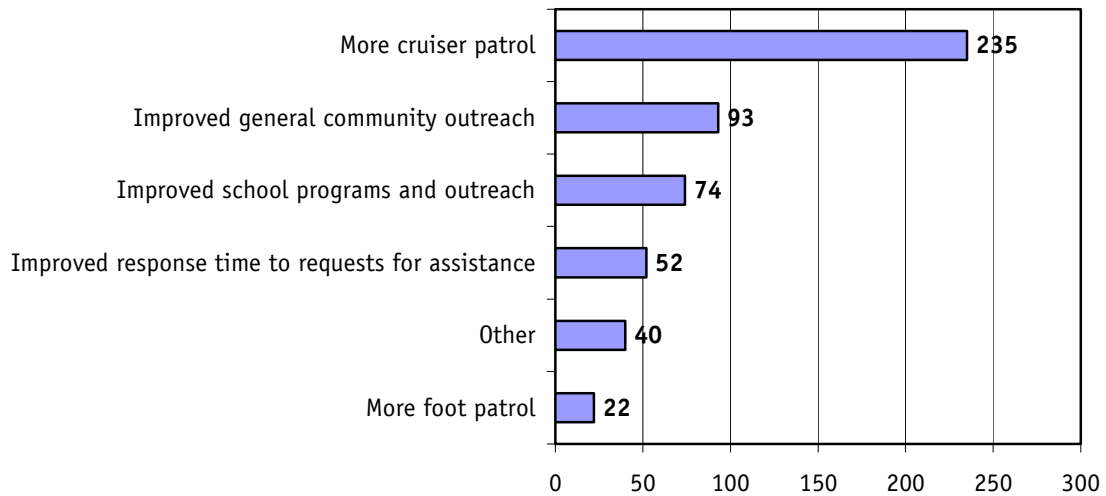
**Approximately how many times in the past month have you seen on-duty police officers patrolling in your neighborhood? (N=493)**



Finally, respondents were asked to identify areas in which police service could be improved. While indicating that the police were fairly visible in their neighborhoods (prior question), the

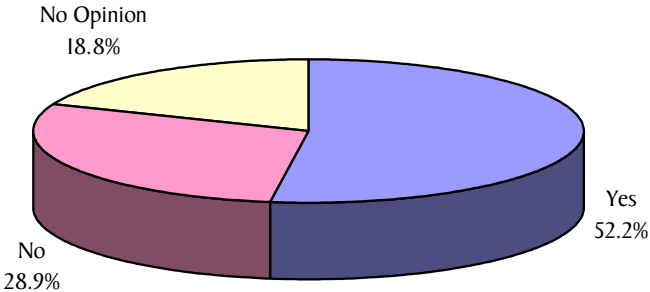
desire for additional cruiser patrol was by far the most frequently selected area for potential police service improvement.

**Are there areas in which police service could improve? (N=varies)**



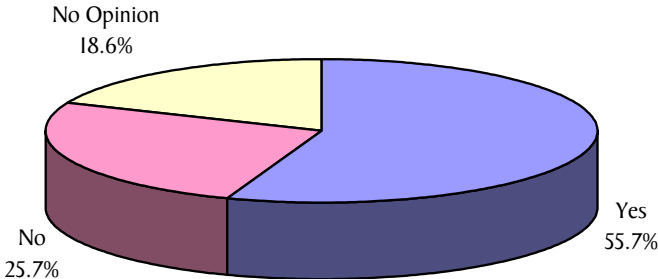
Looking to the future, slightly more than half (52.2%) of all respondents indicated the Township should consider creating a paid, full-time police department in the next three to five years. We would caution against interpreting these results as approval to create a Township police department. However, they may indicate an awareness of the future needs of the Township which merit additional attention and study.

**Do you think the Township should consider creating a paid, full-time police department in the next three to five years? (N=494)**



Another forward looking question asked respondents about their preferences toward purchasing and installing an Emergency Warning System in the Township. A majority of respondents (55.7%) supported consideration of this system.

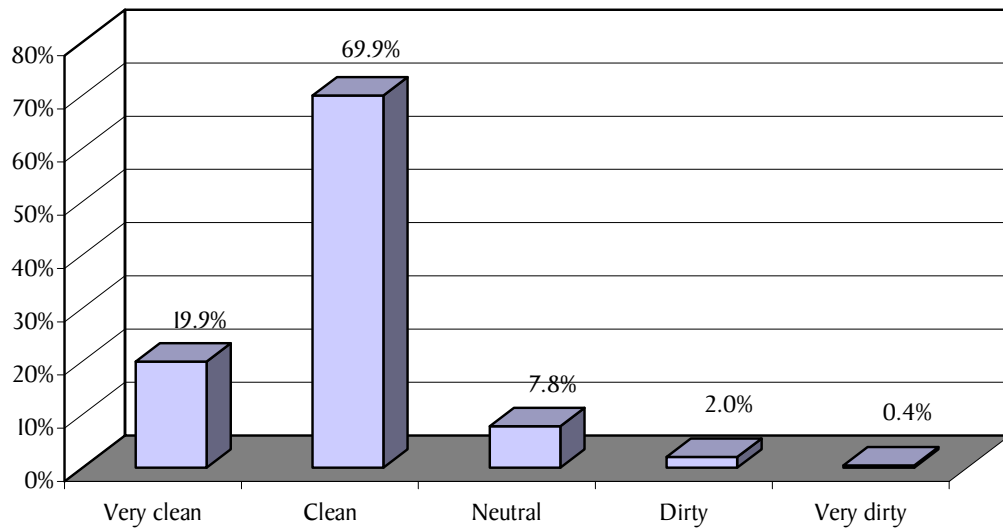
**Do you think the Township should consider purchasing and installing an Emergency Warning System (sirens) throughout the township? (N=501)**



Like the creation of a Township police department, this issue merits additional attention to identify both the costs and benefits of such a system.

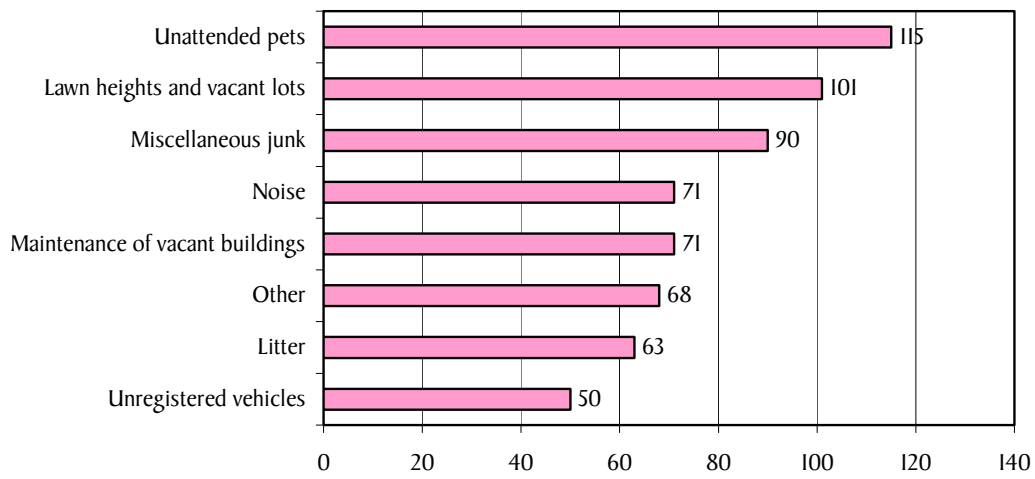
**OTHER SERVICES;** This set of questions is used to capture opinions regarding Township services that do not fit into the previous categories. Overall, respondents indicate Lawrence Township to be clean (69.9%) or very clean (19.9%).

Overall, how would you rate the cleanliness of the Township as a whole? (N=502)



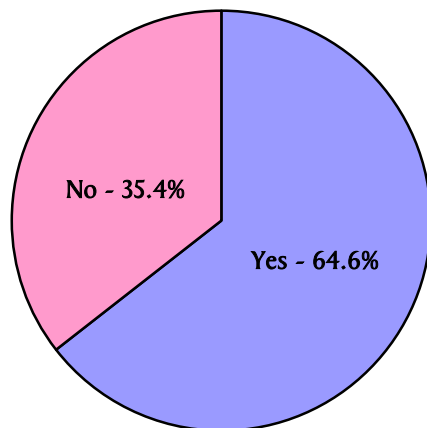
They identify unattended pets, lawn heights and vacant lots, and miscellaneous junk as the top three nuisances in the Township.

Which of the following public nuisances, if any, do you believe the Township has not adequately addressed? (N=varies)



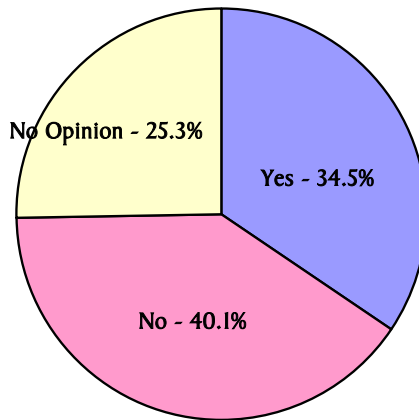
Over six out of ten respondents indicated an awareness of the Township's drop-off recycling service at the Giant Eagle.

Lawrence Township offers drop-off recycling on the last Saturday of the month at the Giant Eagle. Are you aware of the availability of this scheduled service? (N=505)



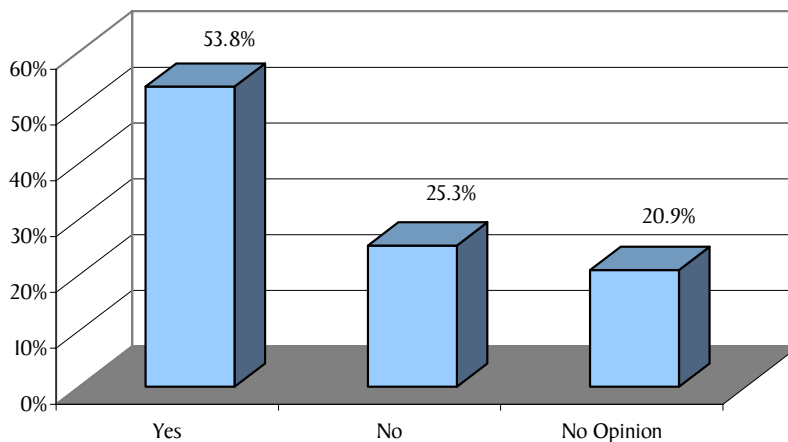
Respondents indicated mixed opinions on whether the Township should consider contracting with a private hauler to provide both waste and recycling pick-up for all residents.

Should the Township consider contracting with a private hauler to provide waste and recycling pickup for all residents? (N=501)



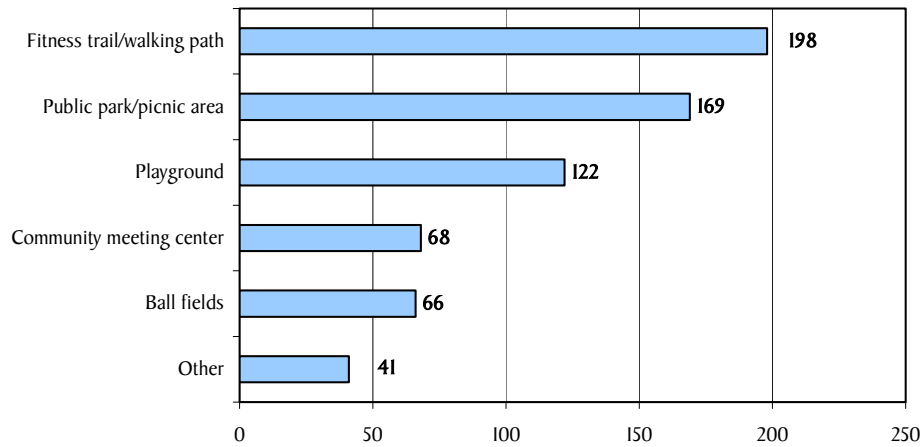
**PARKS AND RECREATION FACILITIES:** Respondents were asked to indicate their preferences towards additional parks and recreation facilities and the types of facilities they would prefer if facilities were to be expanded. A majority of respondents indicated an interest in additional public parks and recreational facilities within the Township.

Would you like to see more public parks and recreational facilities developed within the Township? (N=502)



Fitness trail/walking path and public park/picnic area were the most frequent selections by respondents who favored additional parks and recreational facilities in the Township.

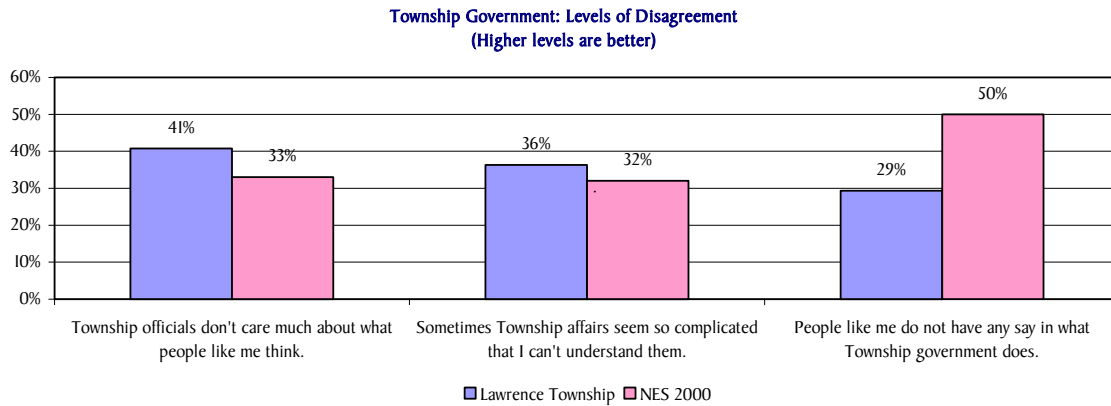
If you answered "yes" to Question #26, what facilities would you like to see developed within the Township? (N=varies)



**TOWNSHIP GOVERNMENT:** In addition to collecting attitudes and opinions regarding public services provided by the Township, the survey also sought to collect information regarding respondents' views toward Township government. Using a set of questions that have been used in other surveys in other communities, we can compare the attitudes of Lawrence Township residents with others. Using the 2000 National Election Studies<sup>2</sup> results, we can compare Lawrence Township survey results with national results. Higher levels of disagreement with this set of questions indicate respondents have positive feelings towards their ability to understand and influence the political process. Lawrence Township survey respondents are above the national average on two of the three comparative measures. We do urge caution in the interpretation and use of these results as many factors can and do influence individual responses to questions of this nature. With only three out of ten respondents disagreeing with the statement, "People like me do not have any say in what Township government does," this

<sup>2</sup> The National Election Studies, Center for Political Studies, University of Michigan. The NES Guide to Public Opinion and Electoral Behavior (<http://www.umich.edu/~nes/nsguide/nsguide.htm>). Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan, Center for Political Studies [producer and distributor], 1995-2000.

may provide the Township with an opportunity to reach out and improve communications to change this negative perception.



**DEMOGRAPHICS:** The Lawrence Community Survey was administered using sampling techniques to collect household data. The use of these techniques allows us to say with a strong degree of confidence that the results are representative of the entire Township population without having to survey every household. In addition to adherence to strict sampling protocol, we can also assess the household data against the 2000 Census results for overall representativeness.

**Table 2: Demographic Representativeness**

Demographic Category	2000 Census	2002 Lawrence Survey
Gender:		
Male	50.3%	44.0%
Female	49.7%	56.0%
Marital Status:		
Married	66.2%	77.6%
Single (never married)	19.8%	4.2%
Single (divorced)	8.3%	10.1%
Surviving Spouse (Female)	4.0%	5.7%
Households with minor Children	35.7%	35.8%
Home Ownership	94.2%	90.6%

As Table 2 indicates, household demographic data compare favorably with overall data collected by the 2000 Census. Female and Married respondents are slightly over-represented in the survey, while Single (never married) respondents are somewhat under-represented in the household population. However, both the sampling protocol and the Census comparison suggest the respondents to this survey are fairly representative of the overall population of Lawrence Township.

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### ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

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Respondents were provided with the opportunity at the end of the survey to make additional comments. All results including the Additional Comments can be found in the Frequency Tables in Appendix C. A sampling of the Additional Comments is shown below.

- *Get rid of cinders and gravel used in winter.*
- *I am happy to learn the governing body of this township is interested in finding out some of the concerns and interests of its citizens.*
- *I appreciate the newsletter that comes out – please publish the cost of this survey in the next one.*
- *Please, no more development. This is what is very appealing for Lawrence Township and almost anywhere where there are larger areas for sale.*
- *The road crew does a very good job. Police, fire, and EMS are excellent. However, zoning has not addressed problems of junk vehicles in the township.*
- *The taxes are getting out of hand.*
- *This appears to be another vehicle to raise our already excessive taxes.*
- *Township should look at other revenue sources for maintenance, improvements, etc. aside from tax increases.*
- *Trucks are speeding on country roads and need to be patrolled.*
- *We are thankful for those who serve our community – elected and volunteer alike.*

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## CONCLUSION

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Over half of those who received a Lawrence Township Community Survey chose to participate and returned a completed survey. This is a positive indication of the high degree of public interest within the Township. In general, respondents indicated a fairly high degree of satisfaction with the public services provided to residents of Lawrence Township. This overall satisfaction is reflected in the large number of respondents who indicated their expectation to remain in the Township for the next five years. Respondents indicated an interest in considering expanding public services such as a full-time police department and additional parks and recreational facilities. This interest is tempered by a concern for the current and future taxes that may be needed to provide such services.

This community survey provides a baseline set of data that may be useful in addressing both current and future needs of the Township. The Center for Public Management and Regional Affairs recommends the Township conduct a similar community survey in three to five years to better assess both change and progress in the Township over time.